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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/05/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KPAL](#) [KDEM](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: PROSECUTOR DISMISSES COMPLAINT AGAINST ADNAN ABU
ODEH

REF: A. AMMAN 5324

[1](#)B. 05 AMMAN 2218

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: The prosecutor for Jordan's State Security Court announced November 5 that he had determined there were no grounds to take action on a complaint that several private citizens had lodged against Palestinian-Jordanian elder statesman and author Adnan Abu Odeh. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) On an Al-Jazeera political talk show taped several months ago and aired in late October, Abu Odeh made guarded but implicitly critical comments on the place of Palestinian-Jordanians in society, on the prospects for reform of Jordan's electoral system, and on the gap between the reform-oriented statements of King Abdullah and follow-up actions. On November 1, a group of East Bankers headed by a hitherto obscure cleric from Jerash announced to media that they had lodged a complaint against Abu Odeh with a prosecutor for Amman's civilian court system. The complaint alleged Abu Odeh's statements on Al-Jazeera had done them harm by inciting ethnic tensions, and that he had also violated Jordan's law against lese majeste.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The Amman civilian prosecutor immediately announced that he had no jurisdiction over the case, and referred it to the State Security Court (SSC), a mixed civilian-military tribunal best known for trying terrorism cases (ref A). An SSC prosecutor summoned Abu Odeh November 2, interviewed him, and released him on his own recognizance. On November 5, the prosecutor announced to media that he had determined there were no grounds on which to prosecute the complaint against Abu Odeh.

[1](#)4. (S) Ambassador raised the issue with King Abdullah early November 5, before the dismissal was announced. The King called the Jerash cleric's initiative "stupid." He said he had learned of it through media reports while he was on a state visit to Holland and was determined not to have it go forward. His staff blamed PM Bakhit for trying to pursue action against Abu Odeh in a misguided effort to ingratiate himself with the King.

[1](#)5. (S) Comment: The complaint against Abu Odeh is a reminder of how sensitive many East Bankers remain to even the most careful public discussion of Jordan's ethnic divide. Many ethnic Palestinians will interpret this episode as a warning from the establishment. In Post's view, the incident is better understood as an illustration of the gap in attitudes toward reform between the King and many of his East Banker backwoodsman subjects. These are the core of the Hashemites' traditional supporters, but they resist many of the King's reform initiatives. Many of them are likely to loudly oppose the electoral reform legislation that the government is expected to bring before the next session of

parliament.

¶6. (S) Bio note: Abu Odeh was born in Nablus in 1933. He served in Jordanian intelligence, was Jordan's PermRep in New York from 1992-1995, and held several ministerial portfolios, including as Royal Court Minister from 1984-1988. King Abdullah dismissed him from a palace advisor role in 2000 when it became clear to the King that Abu Odeh was leaking sensitive information to radical Palestinian figures. Abu Odeh, for his part, attributes the dismissal to anti-Palestinian animus allegedly prevailing at that time in the top ranks of the GID.

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